Security Assistance Training for Emerging Democracies: An Approach

By

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Today, there are some who would have us pull back from the world, forgetting the central lesson of this century: that when America neglects the problems of the world, the world often brings its problems to America's doorstep.

Secretary of Defense William Cohen, during a speech to the Commonwealth Club of California, July 21, 1997

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to propose a fresh approach to the way that we provide security assistance training to the armed forces of an emerging, perhaps even troubled Third World democracy. The best way to professionalize a nation armed forces is to empower the SAO (or whoever has overall responsibility for engagement activities) to design and manage a total training program. The approach begins with integrating the SAO's plan into the embassy's mission performance plan. Although there are numerous engagement training opportunities that can and should be exploited, the most successful programs will succeed in obtaining Foreign Military Financing (FMF) credits for the country in question. While the Administration rarely requests and the Congress rarely appropriates FMF credits to countries that have not received them before, the increasing destabilization of countries and regions that are vital to U.S. interests may eventually force the U.S. government to pursue more creative approaches to nation building. Restrictions on the use of IMET funds for mobile training teams (MTT) may ultimately lead us to ask the Congress for a smaller IMET budget so that funds can instead be provided in the form of FMF credits to purchase in-country training. Changes to the Security Assistance Management Manual may be required. Other funding sources such as traditional CINC activities funds and service funds can and also should be pooled and provided to the SAO to "buy" training for the host nation.

Program Suspension

Serving in a security assistance capacity overseas is full of challenges, pleasures, and sometimes pains. Perhaps one of the greatest of those pains, and also the greatest challenge is having the program that you have devoted all your time and effort to suspended due to a political upheaval in the host nation. The suspension is particularly difficult to accept when the host nation is a developing country struggling with both poverty and democracy. Despite your best efforts to appreciate why the State Department or the Defense Department or the Congress imposed the suspension, inside you truly believe that engagement should take precedence over sanctions. You have read the National Security Strategy, the National Military Strategy, the Department of State Strategic Plan for International Affairs, the United States Security Strategy for the region, the CINC's Theater Engagement Plan, and the Embassy's Mission Performance Plan. In fact you may have even provided input to the latter two documents. Your host nation may just be getting

back on its feet after years or even decades of war, perhaps even a genocide, and you see in those lofty documents all the imperatives that seem to say the opposite of suspension: shape the environment, promote democracy, support the development of security pluralism, expand regional cooperation, increase attention to transnational threats. They call it global engagement, peacetime engagement, comprehensive engagement, theater engagement, defense cooperation, and economic cooperation. A goal may be to "broaden cooperation with the nations of [the region] on security and confidence building."[1] But despite all the strategies and goals and despite your concern that there are other countries, and not necessarily democratic ones, that will take advantage of the situation to increase their influence in the nation that you are cutting off, you, the SAO, have to figure out what went wrong and then explain it to your hosts.

Program Assessment

I recently completed three years in the Office of the CINCPAC Representative, Cambodia. The billet augments the defense attaché office. I had the unique experience of being responsible for coordinating almost all Department of Defense engagement activities in Cambodia, including security assistance.[2] In July 1997 Cambodia's capital city, Phnom Penh, exploded in factional political warfare. Different units of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces loyal to different political parties fought 48 hours of pitched battles. Tanks and even mortars were used in the middle of a densely populated city of one million people. Soldiers and noncombatants died. The winner was one of the two co-prime ministers in the coalition government. The other was out of the country, and he stayed out. The United States immediately suspended all assistance to and cooperation with the government of Cambodia, including security assistance.

Before the dust had even settled and our dependents returned from the ordered departure, the soul-searching began. How could this have happened? How could all of our efforts to professionalize the host nation's armed forces have been rewarded with blood literally on the steps of the embassy? In the three years since the United States had re-established diplomatic relations with Cambodia after an 18 year hiatus, we had hosted the co-ministers of defense in Hawaii and Washington, conducted numerous civil-military relations mobile education teams (MET), civil affairs MTTs, and law of war METs. We had full-time civil affairs personnel augmentation and reservists with specialty skills like financial pay system automation and construction engineers serving on six-month tours. The centerpiece of our engagement was a $600,000 IMET program that was built entirely around professional military education and courses that contributed to nation building such as the Marine Corps' engineer equipment maintenance course and the Coast Guard international military officer's course. The Army's 1st Special Forces Group taught Cambodians to remove mines and unexploded ordnance. United States Army Pacific units built schools and roads, and worked side by side with Cambodian Army doctors. Thirteenth Air Force personnel taught the Cambodian Air Force flight safety. Every month Cambodian officers participated in the fantastic array of Title 10-funded conferences that CINCPAC and her components host every year. Yet none of that stopped the bloodshed.

Where did we go wrong? The short answer is that we did not. Different parts of the Cambodian military did what their political masters ordered them to do. It was the ugly side of civilian control of the military. Three years of American assistance was no substitute for decades of allegiance to this or that political party. But if I had carte blanche to design a program again from scratch, I would want things to be different. The starting point would be the overall engagement plan.

Whose Plan Is It?

If you are a SAO in an emerging democracy, then your overall defense cooperation program no doubt looks like a patchwork quilt. In fact you would be hard pressed to find one comprehensive document where it is all written down. In preparing to turn over my responsibilities to my successor I compiled 26 different programmatic messages which taken together constituted the authorizing documents for everything that we did. The country annex to the regional CINC's theater engagement plan is intended to address that deficiency. The better annexes will either incorporate full descriptions and details of all activities or at least refer to other documents such as the security assistance five-year training plan. Within the multitude of activities, however, there will always be debate over whether it is really a coherent plan or just a comprehensive listing of everything taking place. There will also be debate about command and control. If the senior officer in-country responsible for planning and coordinating engagement activities is the defense attaché, then is not the CINC functioning as a supporting headquarters to the Defense Intelligence Agency? If special operations forces have a role in your engagement plan, which in a developing country they almost always do, then you will experience lively debate over who is supporting whom. Taken in total, however, these are relatively minor issues provided that there is sufficient communication and coordination between all the responsible players. Where there is room for improvement is for all parties to recognize that:

- The overall plan has to be designed in-country and integrated into the embassy's mission performance plan first.

The in-country plan can be staffed through the CINC and other headquarters and it can serve as input to the CINC's theater engagement plan, but ultimately it is the ambassador, the country team, and the SAO who can best match the training requirements of the host nation's armed forces with the foreign policy goals of the United States. Having the ambassador and the country team buy into the plan has numerous benefits. They will support you. They will be more willing to engage the civilian side of the host nation government to influence decisions in your favor. And they will be more willing to integrate your efforts with other U.S. government agencies who share the same goals. There is nothing more gratifying then seeing U.S. soldiers, host nation forces, and a USAID-funded non-governmental organization (NGO) working side-by-side toward a common goal. Synergy is good.

However, integrating your plan into the embassy's mission performance plan might not be as straightforward as it sounds. The State Department's strategic plan for international affairs, the equivalent of the Joint Chiefs' national military strategy, identifies seven national interests and sixteen strategic goals within those national interests.[3] Each goal has strategies for its accomplishment. Country teams take that plan and develop their mission performance plans accordingly. The first national interest identified in the State Department plan is national security. One of two strategic goals that support this national interest is to "ensure that local and regional instabilities do not threaten the security and well-being of the United States or its allies." One of six strategies for achieving that goal is to "use defense cooperation, including alliances, military assistance, military-to-military cooperation, defense trade controls, and arms sales, to develop stable bilateral and multilateral security relations and to help prevent, manage, and defuse regional tensions." While the embassy's plan for meeting that goal may be the perfect place for your plan to make it into the mission performance plan, not all embassies will address that strategic goal. Embassy country teams are free to choose which national interests apply to their country. In the case of my last country team, they determined that the United States had no

national security interests in the host nation. There was no local or regional instability that threatened the national security and well-being of the United States,[4] hence national security was not part of the embassy mission performance plan!

What was a significant part of the embassy performance plan, and probably will be in any emerging democracy, is the national interest of "democracy" and the accompanying strategic goal to "increase foreign government adherence to democratic practices and respect for human rights." None of the strategies identified in the State Department Strategic Plan for International Affairs specifically address professionalizing the host nation military as a strategy for promoting democracy, but that's exactly the place where the SAO needs to make his voice heard, because that is exactly why you should be providing training to the host nation's military.

Measuring Democracy

Embassy mission performance plans take State Department goals, translate them into embassy goals, and then establish performance indicators for the next year. Most are quantifiable and include prior year numbers and out-year projections. What might indicators for measuring whether or not the host nation's armed forces are progressing toward professionalization and support for democracy and civil society look like? Below are a few possibilities. As you read these, picture in your mind where the United States stands, and then analyze whether it is an annual increase or decrease that would indicate movement toward a more democratic, civil society:

- The number of active duty military officers serving as elected officials.

- The number of officers represented on the central or steering committees of political parties.

- The number of officers that credible human rights NGOs identify as culpable for violations of human rights.

- The number of investigations of military personnel by military or civilian prosecutors based on information provided by NGOs or international agencies such as the U.N. Center for Human Rights.

- The number of times that the military courts turn over jurisdiction to civilian courts to try military personnel accused of civil crimes.

- The number of court convictions of military officials for human rights violations.

- The number of times general officers appear on television or are heard in radio interviews stressing the political neutrality of the armed forces.

- The number of officers relieved, punished, or transferred for refusing to follow an order that was politically motivated.

- The number of laws enacted that restrict participation in politics by military personnel.

- The number of military or civil court cases where military personnel are convicted for corruption.

- The number of officers trained in the law of war, human rights, and civil-military relations by U.S. DoD mobile education teams.

- The number of officers that attended E-IMET courses in the USA.

- The number of officers that attended professional military education courses in the USA.

- The number of general officers that attended E-IMET courses in the USA.

- The number of hours of instruction in the law of war that the host nation provides in its training institutions.

- The number of officers that participate in International Red Cross or U.N. Center for Human Rights or NGO law of war and human rights seminars and training.

Quantifying these indicators is relatively self-explanatory. In some cases less is clearly better, such as the number of officers serving on the central committee of a political party. This phenomenon tends to manifest itself most in former communist states where the Communist Party now has a different name but remains a political force in host nation politics. Since many military officers were party members when the party was in power, they will often cling to their membership under the emerging democracy. You should discourage this and reward those officers who practice neutrality. The criterion of turning military personnel over to civil courts for prosecution might strike the American officer as odd since we prefer to try our own personnel, but in developing countries with immature democracies the military court system is often less advanced then the civilian court system. Turning a suspect over to the civilian courts indicates a deference to civilian rule that should be encouraged. The opposite may of course be true if the military court system is up to the task or if you have focused your program on training them for this purpose.[5]

FMF Credits and In-country FMS Training Cases FMF

The armed forces of Third World emerging democracies often share common problems which inhibit the transition to a fully functioning democracy: they are larger then they need to be and hence a drain on limited national resources, they are poorly trained and disciplined, they have poor human rights records, they manage resources poorly, they are often involved with crime or other non-military activities, and they lack loyalty to their constitution as opposed to their immediate chain of command. United States DoD military schools are often too sophisticated to teach practical solutions to some of these issues. In fact our system is so advanced that an IMET student can become overwhelmed and discouraged when he has to return to what we would characterize as a broken system. Some IMET graduates see the situation as so hopeless that they choose not to return. The economical answer is in-country training. In-country training requires funds.

One of the purposes of an embassy mission performance plan is to provide input to the next year's Congressional Presentation Document. It is here that the ambassador can make his desires for foreign military financing credits known.

• The purpose is not to gain billions or even millions for expensive purchases, but rather modest amounts that will allow the SAO to open FMS training cases to shape the in-country portion of his training program.

In the face of zero budget growth requirements, you may even ask that your IMET budget be reduced if the amount will be provided as FMF credits instead.

Your plan should have two pillars: (1) off-the shelf mobile education teams that specialize in management and rule-of-law instruction; and (2) mobile training teams or semi-permanent augmentation that provide specific training in areas that you identify.

In the first pillar there are numerous excellent and well-known alternatives. The mobile education teams fielded by the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies (DIILS) are superb for putting U.S. military lawyers on the ground to address host nation military and civilian leaders at all echelons of their military and government. An American brigadier general (U.S. Army Reserve JAG) and two other officers flying in a Mi-17 helicopter to a military district that is so remote that no one in the embassy has ever even been there to provide two days of seminars on the law of war to fifty host nation officers sends a powerful message. When one of the co-teachers is the Deputy Head of the National Election Commission and the interpreter is a locally-hired Buddhist nun, you definitely get your students' attention. Other useful METs include civil-military relations and the up and coming medical system restructuring program.

In the second pillar are mobile training teams and semi-permanent advisors. MTTs can be as varied as the requirements of the armed forces of your host nation. To the greatest extent possible the training presence should be as long as possible, even if budget constraints necessitate reducing the number of trainers to buy more time in-country. In some countries it can take months or even years to build up the rapport and local knowledge necessary to make a meaningful impact. As complicated as the arrangements may be, a one or even a multi-year permanent change of station billet is worth the price. In-country training of technical and tactical skills makes more sense because you can train more individuals at one time, and you can use the facilities and equipment that the host nation forces have to use long after the MTT has departed. The French Marine Corps is an excellent allied service example of the value of long-term training and advisory efforts. In countries where the French operate, they will establish a military assistance mission whose personnel work and live side-by-side with their host nation counterparts, most often in instructional capacities or as high-level advisors (e.g. a lieutenant colonel advising the deputy chief of staff of logistics of the host nation's army staff). Tours are two or more years and families accompany where feasible. The French generally remained committed even in the face of the political vicissitudes of a problematic government. They understand that it can take years to train a new generation of officers.[6]

A second point to consider is the utility of U.S. Army Special Forces to lead conventional forces on security assistance-funded MTTs.[7] Special Forces are regionally oriented and they train to operate in the cultural and political environments that you typically find in lesser developed countries. They can, therefore, provide the leadership for a specialized MTT such as engineers or technicians that for security or other reasons you may not feel comfortable deploying independently. United States Army Special Forces doctrine used to recognize this role for Special Forces: it was called the security assistance force, or SAF. The term is rarely heard now, but if and when you can get Special Forces to lead training teams, it is a very good idea.

IMET Equals PME

Since the overall approach to training advocated here plans on using FMF for technical and limited tactical training, that leaves IMET funds available for their best use:

- The best use of IMET in support of the armed forces of an emerging democracy is participation in professional military education courses.

PME courses are always in short supply, but they are more valuable then technical courses. PME courses impart management skills and a systematic approach to problem solving that foreign officers can apply to their armed forces. Some SAOs shy away from the courses that are made up entirely of international officers, but the advantage to these courses is that there may be more opportunities and the providing institution may even have the flexibility to add courses as necessary. The other international officers are also more likely to share some of the same organizational challenges back home as the IMET student from the emerging democracy country. It would be ideal if the service staff colleges and senior service colleges created parallel international officer courses similar to the concept behind the unfortunately beleaguered School of the Americas (pre-reorganization). One need only examine the success and popularity of the non-IMET security studies courses held at the Asia-Pacific Center and the Marshall Center to see that there is a need and a benefit to this type of instruction.

An emerging democracy does not usually need more infantry or armor officers who could return to turn their guns on their own people or on their government. They do need finance, medical, engineering, military police, quartermaster, transportation, and personnel management skills. Thus,

- The SAO should focus on the combat support and combat service support arms when selecting officer basic and advanced courses.

The one area where one might deviate from this rule is if specific combat arms training is needed for an individual who will play an important role in enhancing the host nation's capability to deal with transnational threats such as drug trafficking, piracy, and environmental protection. Naval or coast guard training might thus be appropriate in countries where the Navy has the roles and missions that our Coast Guard has, or if they also patrol inland waterways.

The Pieces of the Puzzle

One of the most interesting and challenging aspects of running a military engagement program is coordinating the various non-security assistance programs so that they all contribute to your goals. These activities may include combined exercises, training events, humanitarian/civic assistance projects, and humanitarian assistance projects. If you have a strong plan, especially if it is documented in both the embassy performance plan and the country annex to the CINC's theater engagement plan, then you are headed in the right direction.

- Based on the plan you can work toward your goals by focusing your efforts on a limited number of appropriate training partners.

For the office responsible for coordinating the host nation training partners for engagement activities there is a temptation to spread the wealth among various units and regions. If the

duration and scope of these activities is limited, then such an approach can water down the actual contribution you are making to the professionalization of the host nation military. A more limited number of partners is often better. You have to be careful of mirror-imaging, though. If you focus all your effort on elite units because in our system those units represent the best of the best, then you may be contributing to a situation where those units decide to take the law into their own hands. For this reason you may be better off concentrating on non-combat arms units or on training objectives that address how a host nation's armed forces can integrate support units into an overall effort. This can require some creativity. Suppose that your plan is to increase the capacity of the host nation engineer corps. You could:

- Plan all your humanitarian and civic assistance projects to involve a combined effort with this unit.

- Request (or direct) the Regional Special Operations Command to do their Joint and Combined Exchange Training Events (JCET) with this unit (staff officer skills and leadership training for instance).

- Send the unit's officers to Title 10 funded multilateral conferences.

- Have the unit host the crew of a U.S. Navy ship during a ship visit.

- Arrange medical training for the unit's medics or have unit soldiers participate in other functional training.

- Arrange for a personnel exchange with a U.S. military unit.

No matter what the event or activity, odds are you can probably figure out how to involve the engineer corps in some shape or form. Just the contact alone with American servicemen will enhance their professionalism. To complement these engagement activities you should send talented leaders from this unit to IMET-funded courses in the United States.

Training Officer Empowerment

Ultimately, however, many of the engagement activities that take place in your country will be out of your hands. Either they will have been coordinated well before your watch, or the funding that drives them will have specific restrictions that drive you in a certain direction. Special Operations JCETs, for instance, require the participating U.S. forces to receive fifty percent of the training value of a training event. If you cannot shape the events that outside agencies bring to the table to meet your plan, then you need to consider whether you really need that event. One way to compromise with the providing command is to ask them to tell you how much of their O&M budget they are willing to spend on operations and exercises in your country, and then ask for a menu of choices of what units and time periods they are willing to provide forces. This puts you in the driver's seat. It is surprising how little of this actually happens.

Another variation on this is to gain control over humanitarian assistance funds. Currently a SAO or whoever runs the engagement program submits project proposals annually to the CINC staff who prioritize, eliminate, and then forward a consolidated list to DSCA and OSD for approval and line item funding. The requirement to justify individual projects when only a fraction or even none of them will be approved makes planning a program impossible. It can lead

to embarrassment when the project involves the employment of a combined military force, and after floating numerous proposals through the host nation you have to tell them later that none was approved. This centralized process is the opposite of how the United States Agency for International Development administers humanitarian assistance. USAID headquarters provides a budget to in-country offices, and the office selects the specific activities that they will fund. Similarly, the CINC staff should provide the SAO with an annual budget for planning purposes based on the needs and priority of the country, and the SAO, equipped with the appropriate rules and regulations for ODHACA funds, should develop his projects accordingly. The basis for the budget would be project proposals, but in concept form only.

Finally, there are traditional CINC activities funds and Reserve/National Guard programs for individual augmentation and specific projects. As with humanitarian assistance projects, ideally the SAO will ask for a budget that is tied to a menu of choices that can be tailored to the training needs of the host nation.

Conclusion

This article has presented a range of personal views on the planning and execution of a total training program for the armed forces of an emerging democracy. In many places I have written under the assumption that it is a SAO that is arranging the comprehensive training program. From my standpoint it does not matter who it is. In some locations it may be the defense attaché who is the focal point. At many CINC headquarters and in the Pentagon there is a growing recognition that the CINCs should have O&M-funded billets deployed forward coordinating engagement activities. Whatever the case in your country, the purpose of this article has been to propose an approach to funding and program management that may prove useful in moving the host nation's armed forces toward a more appropriate role in a functioning democracy. There are no doubt many SAOs, DAOs, or CINC representatives that are already successfully employing many of the tools of the trade described here. There are not very many countries, however, that receive FMF credits. A program coordinator can and should work other engagement activities to the benefit of the United States and the host nation, but only FMS training cases permit the total flexibility to "buy" the training the country team determines the host nation needs. But most emerging democracies are also developing countries, and they cannot afford cash. FMF credits is an answer. If indeed the host nation is a problem democracy and prone to coups and human rights violations, and if the United States is committed to staying the course and assisting this country on its path toward full democracy, then this approach can provide a starting point.

About the Author

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Notes

1. E.g. "Broaden cooperation with the nations of Southeast Asia on security and confidence building," in Department of Defense, United States Security Strategy for the East-Asia Pacific Region, 1998.

2. The notable exception was POW/MIA activities conducted by CINCPAC's Joint Task Force Full Accounting.

3. The national interests are (1) national security, (2) economic prosperity, (3) American citizens and U.S. borders, (4) law enforcement, (5) democracy, (6) humanitarian assistance, and (7) global issues. US Department of State, Strategic Plan for International Affairs, http://www.state.gov/www/global/general_foreign_policy/stsp828.html, accessed 24 November 1999.

4. Nor were there any weapons of mass destruction requiring destruction which is the second of the two goals under the national security national interest.

5. For an excellent critique of current U.S. government approaches to democratization assistance, see Elizabeth Cohn, "In Focus: U.S. Democratization Assistance," *Foreign Policy In Focus, Internet Gateway to Foreign Policy*, Volume 4, Number 20, July 1999 (http://www.foreign policy-infocus.org/briefs/vol4/v4n20demo.html, accessed 24 November 1999). Cohn, a professor at Goucher College, focuses on U.S. government funding of democracy-building NGOs. She argues that the NGOs are far from neutral and often end up siding with one or the other political party in the target country. This is certainly my experience in Cambodia. The lesson for U.S. DoD training assistance is to choose your training partners and the individuals who will receive training wisely.

6. Obviously this has advantages when the recipient of the assistance is an emerging democracy, but where the host nation is inherently bad, then such a commitment is wrong. French training assistance to Rwanda has been investigated and discredited as one example where they should have ceased assistance earlier then they did.

7. Depending on the type of engagement activities in your country and who the participants are, you may even have the opportunity to request that Special Forces lead conventional forces in the conduct of a non-SOF event. In July 1996 in Cambodia, for instance, a U.S. Army Special Forces major and his company headquarters led a 100-man humanitarian assistance Joint Task Force of navy and air force engineers that improved a hospital and dug wells in rural Cambodia.